# Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles (NKLA)
## a joint project of
## the California Mutual Housing Association (CMHA) and
## the Community Development Technology Center (CDT)

### grant application to
### Department of Commerce, National Telecommuncations and Information Administration
### Telecommunications Information Infrastructure Assistance Program
### 4/3/96

## Executive Summary

This is a *Planning Project* intended for the *Community-Wide Networking* (primary) application area and the *Human Services* (secondary) application area. During the course of 12 months, the California Mutual Housing Association (CMHA) and the Community Development Technology Center (CDT) will implement a participatory planning process. The process will bring together a broad range of groups concerned with neighborhood development in Los Angeles (community development corporations, advocacy groups, government agencies, financial institutions, schools, and others). Starting from a prototypical web-site (http://www2.sppsr.ucla.edu/ project/copc/home.htm) developed at the UCLA Department of Urban Planning, these groups will experiment with, plan, and improve the web-site to serve the needs of community development in Los Angeles. The primary themes of the web site are: access and use of public information about neighborhood investment and disinvestment. The final product of the process will be: a coalition of groups pursuing a common community development agenda; a web-site used by a broad range of CD-concerned groups, short and long-range development and fund-raising programs for the site and coalition.

Note: The Project Narrative for this grant application is available on the world-wide web at:
http://www2.sppsr.ucla.edu/projects/copc/ntia.htm

## I. Problem Definition

The Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles (NKLA: http://www2.sppsr.ucla.edu/ projects/copc/home.htm) planning project seeks to expand access to the National Information Infrastructure by ~~low and moderate income residents~~ and their representative organizations for the purpose of improving conditions in their neighborhoods. Increasingly, many neighborhoods in ~~Los Angeles are experiencing a pattern where disinvestment--e.g. tax delinquencies, mortgage defaults--leads to deterioration~~--e.g. code violations, health and safety ~~infractions--that, in turn, leads to further neighborhood decline and despair~~--e.g. gang activity, drug abuse, and other forms of destructive behavior. To prevent this downward spiral, intervention must occur early through the ~~concerted activities of an informed community development network.~~ The NKLA starting point is a system that ~~helps residents better address immediate neighborhood issues, and NKLA will serve as a home-base from which foreground data to explore relevant information nationally and internationally.~~

With assistance from a TIIAP planning grant, the LA ~~Community Development Information Coalition (CDIC) will be the vehicle to empower and expand the numbers of local community development leaders, enabling them to effectively shape and utilize new information and communication tools.~~ The initial group of organizations has been drawn from non-profit community-based groups, government agencies, philanthropic foundations, financial institutions, community colleges and universities, but through the NKLA planning process many others are likely to join. This process begins by linking together emerging community development leaders--junior staff and board members of community based organizations, local college students studying community development -- with their more experienced counterparts in joint research. This ~~research~~ will expand local capacity to disseminate and utilize valuable government data on neighborhood conditions that so far has been largely unavailable.

~~The NKLA project has been designed to provide low and moderate income residents with "INSITE," i.e. help them Identify decline, Network for support, Strategize for action, Invest resources, Test interventions and Emulate successful models.~~

_Identify Decline_  A major challenge in combating neighborhood decline is that, unlike its east coast counterparts, much of the problem is not concentrated in "inner city" areas, but rather is ~~dispersed~~ throughout the region. Through a contract with the Los Angeles Housing Department, the NKLA project will make available government information related to the economic and physical status of real estate (the Los Angeles Neighborhood Early Warning System). By bringing together information on tax delinquencies, building code violations, and other data sources, NKLA will provide residents with a tool for identifying specific properties and neighborhoods that are at the greatest risk of decline.

_Network for Support._  The physical distances separating community development leadership in Los Angeles frequently isolates participants from one another, and limits their potential for influence. NKLA provides this far-flung army of concerned citizens with a shared communication system, a mechanism for establishing common development priorities and specific neighborhood foci. Community development lenders, local philanthropies, and relevant government decision-makers, who provide support for local initiatives, will be easily accessible on-line.

_Strategize for Action._  Because Los Angeles is late to realize the importance of reversing incipient neighborhood decline, the strategic repertoire--both in the realms of policy and development--is very narrow. Therefore, the NKLA website will begin by using local college

and university students, studying community development, to compile strategies utilized in Chicago and New York to combat neighborhood decline. How have participating organizations used the Chicago Neighborhood Early Warning System to improve local conditions? LA-based strategies will be described on line as they emerge.

Invest Resources. There is no market for community development resources, including lists of public programs, philanthropic and charitable donations, private investment, technical support, and volunteer initiatives. Often, the most successful community developers are those with the best rolodex. NKLA will serve as a central clearinghouse of resource information, providing a calendar of funding opportunities and a guide to all forms of investment that can be used to reverse neighborhood decline.

Test Interventions. Lessons from community development experience are also not broadly available. Three forms of evaluation will be accessible through NKLA, 1) reports from the "battlefront" i.e. how new initiatives are progressing, 2) post-intervention evaluation, what consequences emerged from the policy/development actions, and 3) feedback on the NKLA information system and its role in promoting local initiatives.

Emulate Successful Models. NKLA will make available and promote descriptions of local attempts to emulate successful neighborhood revitalization programs; either from Los Angeles or elsewhere. What are the identified models, and how are they being adapted to meet different neighborhood conditions and challenges?

Although the initial focus of NKLA is residential decline, the intention is to make available over time, other government and resource providing information valuable to low and moderate income neighborhoods in the areas of health, safety, environment, education, transportation, social services, welfare, labor, and economic development.

Partnership and Community Support.

Under the leadership of the California Mutual Housing Association and the Community Development Technology Center, the following organizations have agreed to join the LA Community Development Information Coalition, and participate in the NKLA planning process.

## Community Development Information Coalition

**University Partners:** LA Trade Tech, UCLA Department of Urban Planning, USC Urban and Regional Planning

**Governmental:** Los Angeles Housing Department, Southern California Association of Governments, LA Department of Water and Power, Councilmember Jackie Goldberg, Councilmember Mike Hernandez

**Non-Profit Organizations:** Drew Economic Development Corporation Televillage, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Communidad Cambria, Inquilenos Unidos, Mental Health Association, Venice Community Housing Corporation, Center for Community Change, Shelter Partnership, Habitat for Humanity, SRO Housing Corporation, West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, Route 2 Community Housing Corporation, Little Tokyo Service Center, A Community of Friends, Esparanza Housing Corporation.

**Financial Institutions:** Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, Bank of America Community Development Bank, Countrywide Funding, California Equity Fund, Low Income Housing Fund, Union Bank, Home Savings and Loan

## Reducing Disparities in Access To and Use of the NII

~~NKLA will utilize local~~ issues to ~~motivate low~~ and modertate income individuals and their organizations to connect to the NII by beginning with information relevant to their immediate neighborhood concerns, and by providing necessary support. Neighborhood ~~organizations such as CBO's are key to this effort because~~ they often have the most accessible ~~computer facilities in a neighborhood. NKLA~~ will:

1. ~~Produce~~ a user-directed community development information/communication system that provides "right to know" information to low income and ethnic minority communities, enabling them to effectively address issues of neighborhood decline.

2. ~~Focus on the emerging community development leadership~~ as the primary vehicle for disseminating the new technology, e.g. community development students at UCLA, USC and LA Trade Tech, as well as board and staff members from community-based organizations.

3. ~~Assess and upgrade communications hardware~~ and software that will enable non-profit community based organizations (CBO's) to participate in the NII, share information with their counterparts in the city and around the nation, and provide access to neighborhood residents.

4. Disseminate new information/communication tools within the LA Community Development Information Coalition by promoting exchange among emerging and established community development leaders.

## Applicant Qualifications:

The California Mutual Housing Association (CMHA) and Community Development Technology Center (CDT) are ~~a young and dynamic organizations that have strong ties to low income and minority neighborhoods, in Los Angeles and a broad range of local institutions.~~ Through their partnership, they are ~~brokering the~~ participation of the three primary centers for community development education and training (~~UCLA, USC, and LA Trade Tech~~), governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and financial institutions, forming the LA Community Development Information Coalition.

The **California Mutual Housing Association** (CMHA) is a statewide nonprofit membership-based organization. Its ~~board of directors is composed primarily of low income residents of resident-controlled housing and members of tenant associations.~~ Currently, CMHA membership consists of sixty-seven resident associations and eighty-six support organizations. Founded in 1991, it has a strong track record of work with a variety of organizations (including CBOs, government agencies, advocacy groups... see attachments for brochure). With the technical support and assistance of CMHA, organizations have developed and preserved over 3,500 units of resident-controlled affordable housing in California. Notably, CMHA is the only housing development organization in southern California tha~~t works intensively with inhabited multi-family slum buildings.~~

The **Community Development Technology Center** (CDT) was established to respond to the ~~concern that real grassroots leadership often does not~~ have much formal education. CDT ~~creates educational opportunities at LA Trade Tech,~~ a lower ~~cost~~ community college that caters to young people from lower income neighborhoods, and that specializes in ~~re-tooling returning students~~ for new economic opportunities. The CDT Center program combines both students from USC and LA Trade Tech in a sequence of community development courses. Many ~~of the Trade Tech enrollees are currently working as junior staff in community-based organizations and~~ government agencies, providing a mechanism for diffusion of the NKLA project. 'Access to the

internet will be utilized to link in emerging community development leaders, even those who reside far from the Trade Tech campus.

Both CMHA and the CDT Center have close links to UCLA's Department of Urban Planning. The NKLA project is an extension of CMHA/UCLA Community Outreach Partnership Center, with collaboration in research, education, and local development. As the nation's first university internet site, UCLA continues to be a leader in internet technology and access. Value from this leadership in internet technology accrues to NKLA in the form of access to exceptional computer resources and outstanding consulting and technical support. These will be utilized, along with a grant from the Los Angeles Housing Department, to develop and provide the data-content of the NKLA web-site.

## Support for End Users

This Planning Project views "NKLA literacy" in emerging community development leaders as the touchstone of the process. "NKLA Literacy" is the ability for people to work effectively with all of the planned components of the web site: computer literacy, internet use, understanding public data, using public data, learning from each others' perspectives and experiences through the "INSITE" process discussed above. Four phases of support aim to turn concerned citizens and emerging leaders into NKLA users and developers. The phases are: get people on-line, work with the NKLA site and technology, improvement and institutionalization ideas, create and submit proposals.

In phase one, participants are organized into "user groups", reflecting their type of organizational affiliations. Groups are introduced to the internet: assistance in setting up their access, some computer training, orientation to the internet and NKLA site. Internet accounts and modems are provided to CBO's. Other user groups are referred to the L.A. Freenet or other service providers. Reflecting NKLA's commitment to grass-roots participation, the NKLA program will be multi-lingual. Spanish language NKLA pages will be complemented by outreach and training in Spanish and other languages. NKLA will also host a kick-off conference. The conference will be used to promote the NKLA opportunity, build enthusiasm, introduce project participants to one another, and solicit initial ideas and directions.

In phase two, user groups will explore the content of the NKLA site. The themes of this phase will be understanding and using public data. Individually and in user groups, participants will access data through NKLA. They will also explore what other types of data are available in the Los Angeles area. This phase will take advantage of the existing practice of students from LATT, UCLA and USC providing valuable neighborhood planning and development research each year. Students will play a leadership role in exploring data and data applications through scheduled classes. Each study group of three to four students will be connected to an "On-line Fellow" who works for a community-based organization. These study groups will explore potential uses for the data that are, and could be, available through NKLA. Secondarily, students and non-students will evaluate the ways in which they may access the data.

In phase three, user groups will create specific proposals for the NKLA site. The theme of this phase will be: how does community learning and technology become institutionalized? User groups will be responsible, with the aid of an organizer and students in special classes, for coming up with proposals for additions, changes, and innovations for the NKLA project. Proposals will include: the idea, the uses that will be served, the groups that will use it, and

suggested resources for implementation. University students will provide practical assistance by providing basic research, investigating data availability, researching funding opportunities, etc.

The final phase will integrate and solidify the knowledge of the participating groups. At a closing conference, user groups will present their proposals and celebrate their accomplishments. A small delegation will be selected to take the user group proposals and formulate short- and long- term plans for NKLA. Short-term items will be immediately implemented in the NKLA project. Long-term ideas will be packaged, along with long-term program support plans into business plans and applications. The ~~goal of this final phase is to have a cross-section of community development concerned groups and individuals who can think~~ as NKLA site users ~~and NKLA program developers~~.

## Evaluation and Dissemination

This Project has ~~evaluation and dissemination structured~~ into its core as a participatory planning project. In terms of evaluation, participants will provide structured feed-back concerning the planning process, and the NKLA project. In user groups, and as individuals, participants will provide written evaluations for trainings and at the close of the each of the "phases". During the final phase, a comprehensive review of the process will be held. Participant evaluations will focus on the quality and usefulness of the experience. Evaluatory comments will be publicly available, and presented at appropriate occasions. NKLA will also provide for quantitative monitoring of the project, tracking (among other things): the number of participants and organizations, types of organizations, the number of neighborhoods with NKLA participants, the number of site hits, and the number of data downloads.

The NKLA project will focus on four modes of dissemination, each building upon the other: initial outreach by CMHA and CDT, in-process outreach by participants, emerging leadership and youth, and the proposal process.

Following the initial outreach that starts the project, participants will be encouraged to bring-in related people and organizations. For instance, a CBO may bring in parent groups from the local high school to test aspects of the NKLA program. Or, a participating bank may bring in title insurance people for participation or evaluation.

~~The focus on students and youth is intended to provide a legacy of young leaders and institutional linkages. Training youth is critical to NKLA's vision of Los Angeles as a the first of a new type of city to be facing urban~~ disinvestment, decay, and despair. Young leaders will be literate in local government data, computers, the internet, community development, and public policy ... the **INSITE** process. Linkages with LA Trade Tech., USC, and UCLA, and their educational programs, will help extend the use and training opportunities well beyond the life of NTIA or similar funding. Lastly, the proposal process provides opportunities to promote and pursue NKLA improvements, NKLA concepts, and NKLA accessibility into the future.